

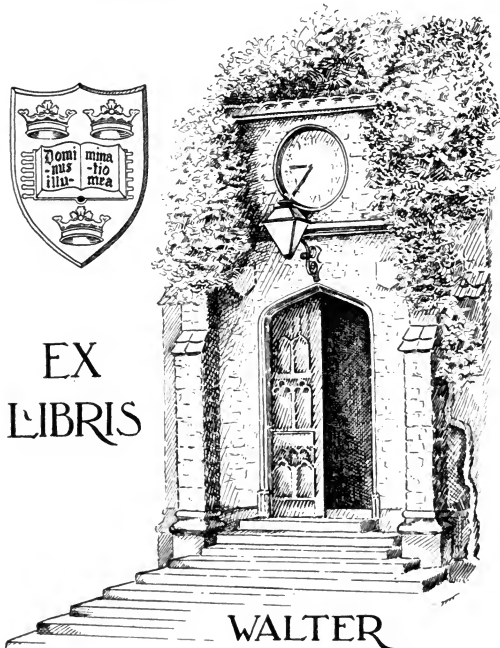




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Dedication.

TO MY FATHER.

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world : nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that you, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept from

me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again ; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.

LONDON, 50, WIMPOLE STREET,
1844.

PREFACE.

THE collection here offered to the public, consists of Poems which have been written in the interim between the period of the publication of my 'Seraphim' and the present ; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression,—and, with the exception of a few contributions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the 'Drama of Exile,' is the longest and most important work (to *me*!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than

was chosen ; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness ; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating ‘groan of the whole creation,’—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the Idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear

up the contrary Idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done, I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling,—and I, without, with my EXILES,—*I* also an exile! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow,—till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture, by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any

rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground ; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground ; they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes ; yet they neither imitated their Homer, nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, who died in the bath, did no harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer, who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation,—whereas Milton's was his own by illustration only,—I appeal. To this analogy—*not* to this comparison, be it understood,—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker ; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and transfigured ; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any. A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things ? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a rude familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out, 'Profane.' Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic ; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing the 'Heavenly Love' among the persons of his drama, is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spi-

ritual creed,—to separate the worshipping from the acting man,—and by no means to ‘live by faith.’ There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated fingers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word GOD were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points which I will not argue, from the conventions of the Christian to his devout heart; and I beseech him generously to believe of me, that I have done that in reverence, from which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place,—

the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the east, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, ערב of Genesis, signifies a ‘mingling,’ and approaches the meaning of our ‘twilight’ analytically. Apart from which considerations, my ‘exiles’ are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them, are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the ‘Drama of Exile’ in the collection, is the ‘Vision of Poets,’ in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broad-cloth, but speaks no more oracles: and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea, is eating deeper

and more fatally into our literature, than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called "*la patience angélique du génie*;" and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my 'Seraphim' was received by the public with more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something indeed I may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort—since "we learn in suffering what we teach in song,"—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous

language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better,—and I feel as if I might do better : I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me :—and if I cry out too hopefully at sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults,—as I go forward to my critics and confess,—they have my heart and life in them,—they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself ; and life has been a very serious thing : there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry ; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work,—not

as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being,—but as the completest expression of that being, to which I could attain,—and as work I offer it to the public,—feeling its short-comings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration,—but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done, should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

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LUCIFER.

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SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with clouds, from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire self-moved. A watch of innumerable angels, rank above rank, slopes up from around it to the zenith ; and the glare, cast from their brightness and from the sword, extends many miles into the wilderness. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance, flying along the glare. The ANGEL GABRIEL and LUCIFER are beside the gate.*

Lucifer. Hail Gabriel, the keeper of the gate !

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable

Under thy keeping.

Gabriel. Angel of the sin,

Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light

Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath,—

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls ;—

Articulate glory from the mouth divine,—
To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly,
Touched like a lute-string,—and the sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
Is earth, not new created, but new cursed—
This, Eden's gate, not opened, but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword
(This sword, alive with justice and with fire!)
That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel! Wherefore, angel, go . . . depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered.

Lucifer.

By no means.

Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on!
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;
It holds, like mine immortal. Presently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves as green
Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-tree—
We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
More eminent for shadow—for the rest
We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,

And temples, if it please you :—we'll have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run along
Right o'er the edges. And good Gabriel,
(Ye like that word Heaven!) *I* too have strength—
Strength to behold Him, and not worship Him ;
Strength to fall from Him, and not cry on Him ;
Strength to be in the universe, and yet
Neither God nor his servant. The red sign
Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,
Is God's sign that it bows not unto God ;
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
Can bear more curse.

Gabriel. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel !

Lucifer. Well ! and if it be,
I CHOSE this ruin : I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitient, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to Heaven ;

And leave me to the earth which is mine own
In virtue of her misery, as I hers,
In virtue of my ruin ! turn from both,
That bright, impassive, passive angelhood ;
And spare to read us backward any more
Of your spent hallelujahs.

Gabriel. Spirit of scorn !

I might say, of unreason ! I might say,
That who despairs, acts ; that who acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and space ;
That who elects, assumes a something good
Which God made possible ; that who lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker . . .

Lucifer. Let it pass !

No more, thou Gabriel ! What if I stand up
And strike my brow against the crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say for that,
My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit ? Sit *thou*.

Gabriel. I kneel.

Lucifer. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy Heaven,
And leave my earth to me.

Gabriel. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely ; and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love: His lightnings go abroad,
His pity may do so ; His angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.

Lucifer. Verily,
I and my demons—who are spirits of scorn—
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benigntest angel of you all.

Gabriel. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise,
While hate avengeth.

Lucifer. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in Heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for my wrist,
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne ;

When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Drawn from the finite, speeding my descent ;
When countless angel-faces, still and stern,
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens,
Adown the abysmal spaces ; and I fell,
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
By the sight in your eyes ;—’t was then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood !

Gabriel. Yet, thou discrowned one, by the truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would give away
All,—save that truth, and His love over it,—
To lead thee home again into the light,
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars ;
When their rays tremble round them with much song,
Sung in more gladness !

Lucifer. Sing, my morning star !
Last beautiful—last heavenly—that I loved !
If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,
What were it to this angel ?

Gabriel.

What Love is !

And now I have named God.

Lucifer.

Yet Gabriel.

By the lie in me which I keep myself,
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
Thou and I have not solved his problem yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
That red-clay and a breath ! who must, forsooth,
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his trees
And running in his rivers, to make glad
His soul made perfect ; if it were not for
The hope within thee, deeper than thy truth,
Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
Which affront Heaven with their vacuity ?

Gabriel. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in Heaven
To suit thy bitter words. Glory and life
Fulfil their own depletions : and if God
Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in

They dare not look in one another's face,
As if each were a cherub !

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of their future ?

Lucifer. Only as much as this :
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gabriel. Nothing more ?

Lucifer. Why so the angels taunt ! What should be
more ?

Gabriel. God is more.

Lucifer. Proving what ?

Gabriel. That He is God,
And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere he created,—leave the earth to God !

Lucifer. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin !

Gabriel. I charge thee by the memory of Heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God !

Lucifer. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.

Gabriel. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,
When up against the white shore of our feet,

The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
Of all that coil, roared outward into space
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to God.

Lucifer. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.

Gabriel. I charge thee by that mournful morning star
Which trembleth

Lucifer. Hush ! I will not hear thee speak
Of such things. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends,
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel !
Watch out thy service ; I assert my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men bend slow their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere
To ruffle their smooth manhood, and break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS,

*(Chanting from Paradise, while Adam and Eve fly across
the sword-glare.)*

Harken, oh harken ! let your souls, behind you,

Lean, gently moved !

Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,

O lost, beloved !

Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled
angels,

They press and pierce :

Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—

Voice throbs in verse !

We are but orphaned Spirits left in Eden,

A time ago—

God gave us golden cups ; and we were bidden

To feed you so !

But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,

No work to do ;

The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining

The whole earth through ;

And all those stains lie clearly round for shewing

(Not interfused !)

That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,

Than shall be used.

Harken, oh harken ! ye shall harken surely,

For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,

Of spirits' tears !

The yearning to a beautiful, denied you,

Shall strain your powers :—

Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,

Resumed from ours !

In all your music, our pathetic minor

Your ears shall cross ;

And all fair sights shall mind you of diviner,

With sense of loss !

We shall be near, in all your poet-languors

And wild extremes ;

What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,

Or light with dreams !

And when upon you, weary after roaming,

Death's seal is put,

By the forgone ye shall discern the coming,

Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
Slow and solemn to your hearing !
Plane and cedar, palm and fir,
Tamarisk and juniper,
Each is throbbing in vibration
Since that crowning of creation,
When the God-breath spake abroad,
Peeling down the depths of Godhead,
Let us make man like to God.
And the pine stood quivering
In the Eden-gorges wooded,
As the awful word went by ;
Like a vibrant chorded string
Stretched from mountain-peak to sky !
And the cypress did expand,
Slow and gradual, branch and head ;
And the cedar's strong black shade
Fluttered brokenly and grand !—
Grove and forest bowed aslant
In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
In the sunlight and the moonlight
Greenly sifted through the trees.
Ever wave the Eden trees
In the nightlight, and the noonlight,
With a ruffling of green branches
Shaded off to resonances ;
Never stirred by rain or breeze !

Fare ye well, farewell !

The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,

Expire at Eden's door !

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye heard before :

Farewell ! the trees of Eden

Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-Spirits.

Hark ! the flow of the four rivers—

Hark the flow !

How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go,
Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,—
Of the banks
Where the green palms and red deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,
As if all would drink at once,
Where the living water runs !
Of the fishes' golden edges
Flashing in and out the sedges :
Of the swans on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding streams,
With impassive eyes turned shoreward,
And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotos leaning forward
To help them into dreams.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door !
Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye heard before :

Farewell ! the streams of Eden,

Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale

That singeth in Eden after you ;

And I am singing loud and true,

And sweet,—I do not fail !

I sit upon a cypress-bough,

Close to the gate ; and I fling my song

Over the gate and through the mail

Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—

Over the gate and after you !

And the warden angels let it pass,

Because the poor brown bird, alas !

Sings in the garden, sweet and true.

And I build my song of high pure notes,

Note over note, height over height,

Till I strike the arch of the Infinite ;

And I bridge abysmal agonies

With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—

And something abides, and something floats,

In the song which I sing after you :
Fare ye well, farewell !
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door !
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before :
Farewell ! the birds of Eden,
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng !
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas
Of blossom and bloom ;
We call your thoughts home, as
Ye breathe our perfume ;
To the amaranth's splendour
Afire on the slopes ;
To the lily-bells tender,
And grey heliotropes !
To the poppy-plains, keeping
Such dream-breath and blé,

That the angels there stepping
Grew whiter to see !
To the nook, set with moly,
Ye jested one day in,
Till your smile waxed too holy,
And left your lips praying !
To the rose in the bower-place,
That dripped o'er you sleeping ;
To the asphodel flower place,
Ye walked ankle deep in !
We pluck at your raiment,
We stroke down your hair,—
We faint in our lament,
And pine into air.

Fare ye well, farewell!
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
Expire at Eden's door !
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before :
Farewell ! the flowers of Eden,
Ye shall smell nevermore.

*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back.
Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark ANGEL passing quickly, is
cast upon the Sword-glare.*

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge,
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate ?

Eve. I have strength to look upward to thy face.

Adam. We need be strong : yon spectacle of cloud
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal in a cloud. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead ;
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless ;
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side,—in pendulous horror slow,—
Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat
On the intermediate ground from that to this,
In still reflexion of still splendour. They,
The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, dominations, principedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,

On either side, and overhead the gate,—
Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
Set in an apex. That their faces shine
Betwixt the solemn claspings of their wings,
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—
We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them shine,
The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
To me, at least,—than could appear their light.

Adam. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
In a heap earthward; and thy body heaves
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
Seeing that I confess myself thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
Together with my name. Sweet, punish me!
O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said

My seed shall the first tempter's : strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden ! and as HE,
Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord !
I, also, after tempting, writhe on ground ;
And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
As suits me, O my tempted.

Adam.

My beloved,

Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
My blessed life and light ! If we have fallen,
It is that we have sinned,—we : God is just ;
And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
It must be that His balance holds the weights
Of first and last sin on a level. What !
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God

Might take thee into grace for scorning me ;

Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof

Of inward abrogation of the sin !

And so, the blessed angels might come down

And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—

Because I was not near to make them sad,

Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. THOU !

Adam. If God,

Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world

Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,

The best gift last ; the last sin was the worst,

Which sinned against more complement of gifts

And grace of giving. God ! I render back

Strong benediction and perpetual praise

From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,

Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),

That Thou, in striking my benumbed hands,

And forcing them to drop all other boons

Of beauty, and dominion, and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this life
Within life—this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation !

Eve. Is it thy voice ?

Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden ?

Adam. O my God !

I, standing here between the glory and dark,—
The glory of thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall ; the dark of our distress,
Which settles a step off in that drear world—
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*,
Than left me lorn of her in paradise ;—
With angel looks and angel songs around,
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness,
Without the uses of her comforting.

Eve. Or is it but a dream of thee, that speaks
Mine own love's tongue ?

*Adam.*Because with *her*, I stand

Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven, which doth accuse me,
And look up from the earth which doth convict me,
Into her face ; and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love ; and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds ;
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart ;
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
Do quicken and sublimite my mortal breath,
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides,
But overtops this grief !

Eve.

I am renewed :

My eyes grow with the light which is in thine ;
The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up—so ! Because I comprehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death ; and yet because
I know this strength of love, I seem to know
Death's strength, by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay ! and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life from me ;
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
And weep so,—as if in a dream or prayer,—
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought
Which clipped my heart, and showed me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance, cast by swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
Rocking against each other—O Lord God !
(’Twas so I prayed) I ask Thee by my sin,
And by thy curse, and by thy blameless heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from thy face,
And from the face of my beloved here,
For whom I am no helpmete, quick away
Into the new dark mystery of death !
I will lie still there ; I will make no plaint ;
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,—

Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun,
Where peradventure I might sin anew
Against thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
Oh death, whate'er it be, is good enough
For such as I.—For Adam—there's no voice,
Shall ever say again, in heaven or earth,
It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer : it shall be prayed no more ;
And God did use it for a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer :
Love makes it strong : and since I was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes slant from Heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve.

I think

That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—
But the love-angels who came erst to us,
And when we said ‘God,’ fainted unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto God,
(As if He drew them inward in a breath)
His name being heard of them,—I think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
Invisible, but gracious. Hark—how soft !

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel !
Heaven assist the Human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the Golden ?
Do ye guess our choice is,

Being un beholden,
To be harkened by you, yet again ?

This pure door of opal,
God hath shut between us ;
Us, his shining people,—
You, who once have seen us,
And are blinded new !
Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glowed.
We came as if the Heavens were bowed
To a milder music rare !
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud ;
While our wings, outspreading

Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or, abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendour
In either human face !
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands,
Breaking, with a sudden grace,
We took you unaware !
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Oft, when Heaven-descended,
Shut up in a secret light
Stood we speechless in your sight,
In a mute apocalypse !
With dumb vibrations on our lips,
From hosannas ended ;

And grand half-vanishings
Of the forgone things,
Within our eyes, belated !
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from our Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opening into ministration.

Chorus.

Then in odes of burning,
Brake we suddenly,
And sang out the morning
Nobly up the sky.—
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
And taught them our intense Divine—
With our vital fiery notes
All disparted hither, thither,
Trembling out into the æther,—
Visible like beamy motes !—
Or, as twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,

The massive sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung !
While he, aweary and in swoon,
For joy to hear our climbing tune
Pierce the faint stars' concentric rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*Chant dies away confusedly, and enter LUCIFER.*

Lucifer. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
Beautiful Eve ! The times have somewhat changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree ;
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam ! hold
My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—
And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer !
And leave us to the desert thou hast made
Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime

Athwart this path kept holy to our tears,
Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

Lucifer. Curse freely ! curses thicken. Why, this
Eve

Who thought me once part worthy of her ear,
And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out
Around their continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And, down from her white heights of womanhood,
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly !

I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt :
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn ;
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee

As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Lucifer. Our new gods, methinks,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies :
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery,
From all the wandering visions of the world,—
May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both !

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

Lucifer. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly ! [*Aside.*

Eve. Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam ! let me answer him ;
For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise !
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,

As freely as the streams of Eden flowed,
When we were happy by them. So, depart ;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our time
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
To harm us any more or scoff at us,
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face
To find it the communion of the dust
And issue of the curse.—Go.

Adam. At once, go.

Lucifer. Forgive ! and go ! Ye images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this ?
What words are these to use ? By what a thought
Conceive ye of me ? Yesterday—a snake !
To-day—what ?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say !

Lucifer. Who told thee, Adam ?

Adam *Thou !* The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes,
Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.
I think that thou hast one day worn a crown
Under the eyes of God.

(To give the things your names) that spirits should rise
Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.

The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
Whoever riseth must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Lucifer. Ha, my clay-king !
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
The after generations. Earth, methinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs ;
Classing these present dogmas with the rest
Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits
And saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved ! it is not good to speak with him.
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more :
We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
We would be alone.—Go.

Lucifer. Ah ! ye talk the same,

All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart !

In Heaven they said so ; and at Eden's gate,—

And here, reiterant, in the wilderness !

None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair !

None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet !

And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.

Look on me, woman ! Am I beautiful ?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Lucifer. Nothing more ?

Eve. I think no more.

Lucifer. False Heart—thou thinkest more !

Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand

Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves

Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*

Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word

Which thrilled around us—God Himself being moved,

When that august work of a perfect shape,

His dignities of sovran angel-hood,

Swept out into the universe,—divine

With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,

And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings.

Whereof I was, in motion and in form,
A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
As God's voice is not here ; nor even my crown—
I do not know. What is this thought or thing
Which I call beauty ? is it thought or thing ?
Is it a thought accepted for a thing ?
Or both ? or neither ?—a pretext—a word ?
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath : my perceptions reel
For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colourless,
Is nothing to the eye ; that pine tree there,
Without its black and green, being all a blank ;
So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
In man or angel. Angel ! rather ask

What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
And what collateral love moves on with thee ;
Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Lucifer. Love ! what is love ? I lose it. Beauty
and love !

I darken to the image. Beauty—Love !

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill

Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—

And, hark ! the starry harmony remote

Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen so. By the
hope

And aspiration, by the love and faith,

We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death !

Adam. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God !

How dim the angel grows, as if that blast

Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself into
uncertain articulation.*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative.
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet, and strange ! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam.

Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.

Mine orb'd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.
O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee ?
Ai, ai, Heosphoros !
I loved thee, with the fiery love of stars,

Who love by burning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah, not to love.

Ai, ai, Heosphoros !

Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,
Pale-passioned for my loss.

Ai, ai, Heosphoros !

Mine orb'd heats drop cold

Down from thee, down from thee,

As fell thy grace of old

Down from me, down from me.

O my light-bearer,

Is another fairer

Won to thee, won to thee ?

Ai, ai, Heosphoros,

Great love preceded loss,

Known to thee, known to thee.

Ai, ai !

Thou, breathing thy communicable grace

Of life into my light,

Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,

Hast inly fed,

And flooded me with radiance overmuch

From thy pure height.

Ai, ai !

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,

Erect, irradiated,

Didst sting my wheel of glory

On, on before thee,

Along the Godlight, by a quickening touch !

Ha, ha !

Around, around the firmamental ocean,

I swam expanding with delirious fire !

Around, around, around, in blind desire

To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha !

Until, the motion flinging out the motion

To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,—

To a blind whirl of rapture and delight,—

I wound in girant orbits, smooth and white

With that intense rapidity !

Around, around,

I wound and interwound,

While all the cyclic heavens about me spun !
Stars, planets, suns, and moons, dilated broad,
Then flashed together into a single sun,
And wound, and wound in one ;
And as they wound I wound,—around, around,
In a great fire, I almost took for God !
Ha, ha, Heosphoros !

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee !
O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me !
Ai, ai, Heosphoros !

I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou :
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know—
I am strange—I am slow !
Ai, ai, Heosphoros !

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me.

Ai, ai !

When, having wept all night, at break of day,
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.

Ai, ai !

And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss !

Ai, ai, Heosphoros !

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces ! Is the wind up ?

Eve.

Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the junipers
Rock slowly through the mist, without a noise ;
And shapes, which have no certainty of shape,
Drift duskly in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which contract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve.

O Life

Which is not man's nor angel's ! What is this ?

Adam. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life
Contains all life beside.

Eve.

I think the earth

Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense
Of those first laws affixed to form and space
Or ever she knew sin !

Adam.

We will not fear :

We were brave sinning.

Eve.

Yea, I plucked the fruit

With eyes upturned to Heaven, and seeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not God.

My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.

Adam. Night is near.

Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back,
And stand within the sword-glare till we die ;
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved !

We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple : we must wait
Until He gives death, as He gave us life ;
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift,
Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah ! Dost thou discern what I behold ?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes,
From their dilated orbits, bound before
To meet the spectral Dread !

Eve. I am afraid—

Ah, ah ! The twilight bristles wild with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.

How near they reach . . . and far ! How grey they
Treading upon the darkness without feet,— [move—
And fluttering on the darkness without wings !
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground ;
Some keep one path, like sheep ; some rock like trees ;
Some glide like a fallen leaf ; and some flow on,
Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire—
And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah ! Dost thou pause to say
Like what ?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
From all the emerald splendour of his height,
And writhed,—and could not climb against the curse,
Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
I think it is God's will to make me afraid ;
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
Of His beloved angels—gone from us,
Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
That didst permit the angels to go home,
And live no more with us who are not pure ;
Save *us* too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,

As *we* are in the purest ! Pity us—
Us too ! nor shut us in the dark, away
From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such, through the precedence
Of earth's adjusted uses,—evermore
To doubt, betwixt our senses and our souls,
Which are the most distraught, and full of pain,
And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, Sweet !

The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
With slow concentric movement, each on each,—
Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation ; till the throng
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
Distinguishable phantasms, vague and grand,
Which sweep out and around us vastly,
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow ! there are
twelve.

Thou, who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,

Which rounds us with its visionary dread,—
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
In fantasque apposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God,
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven !
But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,
In twelve colossal shades, instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

Eve.

By dream or sense,

Do we see this ?

Adam.

Our spirits have climbed high

By reason of the passion of our grief,—

And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,

To the significance and heart of things

Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved !
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
Thy terror of the shadows ;—what is known
Subduing the unknown, and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
Presents a lion,—albeit, twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his mane !
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance ; and there, a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself ;
A bull stands horned here with gibbous glooms ;
And a ram likewise ; and a scorpion writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime, and stings the dark !
This way a goat leaps, with wild blank of beard ;
And here, fantastic fishes dusky float,

Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,—
As the stars do in watching anything,—
Should light them forward from their outline vague,
To clear configuration—

*Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic nature, arise
from the ground.*

But what Shapes

Rise up between us in the open space,—
And thrust me into horror, back from hope !

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,—
With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces !—with no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound !

O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound !
How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail,
Around the cyclic zodiac ; and gains force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,

On the wan faces of these images
We see before us ; whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate song
From out that spiral faintness of lament—
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth ;
 God spake me softly out among the stars,
As softly as a blessing of much worth,—
 And then, His smile did follow unawares,
That all things, fashioned, so, for use and duty,
Might shine anointed with His chrism of beauty—
 Yet I wail !

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
 Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall—
Individual aspect and complexity
 Of giratory orb and interval,
Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being, beyond sight—
 Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless beasts,

Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming ;
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,

That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,
And tasted, in each drop within the measure,
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—

Yet I wail !

What a full hum of life, around His lips,

Bore witness to the fulness of creation !
How all the grand words were full-laden ships ;
Each sailing onward, from enunciation,
To separate existence,—and each bearing
The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing !—

Yet I wail !

Eve. They wail, beloved ! they speak of glory and
God,

And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
Into the lap of silence !

Adam. Hark, again !

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
My joy stood up within me bold and glad,

To answer God ; and, when His work was full,
To “ very good,” responded “ very glad ! ”
Filtered through roses, did the light inclose me ;
And bunches of the grape swang blue across me—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers ! I rejoiced
In my young tumbling lions, rolled together !
My stag—the river at his fetlocks—poised,
Then dipped his antlers, through the golden weather,
In the same ripple which the alligator
Left in his joyous troubling of the water—
Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,—
What wordless triumph did your voices render !
O mountain-summits, where the angels stood,
And shook from head and wing thick dews of
splendour ;
How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye were worthy !
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes !

My horses—my ground eagles, for swift fleeing !

My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,—

My calm cold fishes of a silver being,—

How happy were ye, living and possessing,

O fair half-souls, capacious of full blessing.

Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge to-day,

Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers,

By God's sword at your backs ! I lent my clay

To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers :

And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me

The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—

And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten

My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured ?

Accursed transgressors ! down the steep ye hasten,—

Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it down-
ward

Unto your ruin. Lo ! my lions, scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
And I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Do ye hear that I wail ?
I had no part in your transgression—none !
My roses on the bough did bud not pale—
My rivers did not loiter in the sun.
I was obedient. Wherefore, in my centre,
Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter !—
And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! I shriek in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded !
My nightingales sang sweet without a fault,
My gentle leopards innocently bounded ;
We were obedient—what is this convulses
Our blameless life with pangs and fever-pulses ?
And I wail !

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His angels' swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
Let us pass out, and flee.

Inferior creatures, but still innocent—
Be salutation from a guilty mouth,
Yet worthy of some audience and respect
From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, who is over us,
To give rebuke or death ; and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye, who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such peace
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge,
Such as the Heavens have made you. Verily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam ! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did, to reach disdain,
Who rather should be humbler evermore,
Since self-made sadder. Adam ! shall I speak—
I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud ?
I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
My king, if not the world's ?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—

. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits !

I pray you humbly in the name of God ;
Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
From the wronged to the wronger ; this and no more ;
I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptation of pure joy,
Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars ; or watch the vales,
Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy ;
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells
Work out their bubbling lengths beneath the ground,—
And all the birds sing, till, for joy of song,
They lift their trembling wings, as if to heave
The too-much weight of music from their heart,

And float it up the æther ! I am 'ware
That these things I can no more apprehend,
With a pure organ, into a full delight ;
The sense of beauty and of melody
Being no more aided in me by the sense
Of personal adjustment to those heights
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,—
But rather coupled darkly, and made ashamed,
By my percipieny of sin and fall,
And melancholy of humilient thoughts.
But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
Your accusation must confront my soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze
Must evermore subdue me ; be content—
Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick
As watering dews of Eden, unapproached ;
And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,
Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
And peradventure better, while more sad.
For look to it, sweet Spirits—look well to it—
It will not be amiss in you who kept

The law of your own righteousness, and keep
The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—
To pity me twice fallen,—from that, and this,—
From joy of place, and also right of wail,—
“ I wail ” being not for me—only “ I sin.”
Look to it, O sweet Spirits !—

For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
The lady of the world, princess of life,
Mistress of feast and favour? Could I touch
A rose with my white hand, but it became
Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely
Along our swarded garden, but the grass
Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as alive,
With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
Because I stood there? Could I turn to look

With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
And is not this much woe, to cry “alas!”
Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,
To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?
To have stretched mine hand, and plucked it from the
And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this [tree,
Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Hearken,
Our God, who is the enemy of none, [Spirits!
But only of their sin,—hath set your hope
And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
Show reverence, then,—and never bruise her more
With unpermitted and extreme reproach;
Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
Beneath your trampling feet, God’s gift to us,
Of sovranly by reason and freewill;
Sinning against the province of the Soul

To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate ;
And pass out from her presence with no words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart,—
O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,—
And let me speak ; for, not being innocent,
It little doth become me to be proud ;
And I am prescient by the very hope
And promise set upon me, that henceforth,
Only my gentleness shall make me great,
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
Be witness that I stand in your reproof
But one sun's length off from my happiness—
Happy, as I have said, to look around—
Clear to look up !—And now ! I need not speak—
Ye see me what I am ; ye scorn me so,—
Because ye see me what I have made myself
From God's best making ! Alas,—peace forgone,—
Love wronged,—and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
Upon all, vainly ! Alas, me ! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that best,
Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest,
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—

What word metes absolute loss ? let absolute loss
Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless world !
I, reigning the earth's empress, yesterday,
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers !
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
Composed and glad, as singing-birds the sun,
Might shriek now from our dismal desert, " God,"
And hear Him make reply, " What is thy need,
Thou whom I cursed to-day ? "

Adam.

Eve !

Eve.

I, at last,

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him ! And, so, pity us,
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow
With boughs on both sides. In the shade of which,
When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
For the poor sake of our humility,

Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
And drop your twilight dews against our brows ;
And stroking with mild airs, our harmless hands
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER *rises in the circle.*

Lucifer. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall ?
Of hate subduable to pity ? Eve ?
Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
My docile Eve ! I teach you to despond,
Who taught you disobedience. Look around ;—
Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk, unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again, and talked !
What are your words to them ? your griefs to them ?
Your deaths, indeed, to them ? Did the hand pause
For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
That they should pause for *you*, in hating you ?
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,

Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. It is true.

Lucifer. Ay, it is true. The clay-king testifies
To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. And certes, *that* is true.
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou universe,
That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God,
And could not see Him;—wretched Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!

Earth Spirits. I wail—wail!

Lucifer. (*After a pause*) Dost thou remember,

Adam, when the curse

Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
And roared, O Adam—comprehending doom ;
So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here, between the Heavens and earth,
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
Which damn me to this depth !

Earth Spirits.

I wail, I wail !

Eve. I wail—O God !

Lucifer.

I scorn you that ye wail,

Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
And deal in pathos of antithesis
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are ;—
I scorn you like an angel ! Yet, one cry,
I, too, would drive up, like a column erect,
Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,
A monument of anguish, to transpierce
And overtop your vapory complaints
Expressed from feeble woes !

Earth Spirits.

I wail, I wail !

Lucifer. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,

The outcast, and the mildew of things good,
The leper of angels, the excepted dust
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
To whom the highest and the lowest alike
Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—
Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair;
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
His blessing for chief angels, on my head,
Until it grew there, a crown crystallised!
Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as “Gabriel”—
Lucifer—soft as “Michael!” while serene
I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
Answered “my Father,” innocent of shame
And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
White angels in your niches,—I repent,—
And would tread down my own offences, back
To service at the footstool? *That’s* read wrong:
I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep

Against the sides of this prodigious pit,
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail,
On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a woe sustained
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals ! Puny griefs,
In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
To your own conscience, by the dread extremes
Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
It is a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
Strewn woolly soft with promise ; if ye have sinned,
Your prayers tread high as angels ! if ye have grieved,
Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
And power to die disproveth right to grieve.
Go to ! ye call this ruin. I half-scorn
The ill I did you ! Were ye wronged by me,
Hated and tempted, and undone of me,—
Still, what 's your hurt to mine, of doing hurt,
Of hating, tempting, and so ruining ?
This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through

The hand that wields it.

Go—I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can ;
I would not certes cut you short in hate—
Far be it from me ! hate on as ye can !
I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves,
And, lifting up their brownness, show beneath
The branches very bare.—Beseech you, give
To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love
For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
An answer rather fitting to the sin
Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I trow,
For justice' sake, gave their's.

I curse you both,

Adam and Eve ! Say grace as after meat,
After my curses. May your tears fall hot
On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,
Ye and your generations, in all plagues,
Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
And hideous forms of life and fears of death ;

The thought of death being alway eminent
Immoveable and dreadful in your life,
And deafly and dumbly insignificant
Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,—
Whichever of you lieth dead the first,—
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice !
My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
And HE find no redemption—nor the wing
Of seraph move your way—and yet rejoice !
Rejoice,—because ye have not set in you
This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate
Which glares without, because it burns within—
Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
To God and His reflex beatitudes,
Moan ever in the central universe,
With the great woe of striving against Love—
And gasp for space amid the Infinite—
And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
To kingship of resistant agony
Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,

And willing to hate good and to hate love,
And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the Past, and damning the To come—
Go and rejoice ! I curse you ! [LUCIFER *vanishes*.
Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you ! there's no pardon
Which can lean to you aright !
When your bodies take the guerdon
Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you.
Then ye shall not move an eyelid
Though the stars look down your eyes ;
And the earth, which ye defiled,
She shall show you to the skies,—
“ Lo ! these kings of ours—who sought to comprehend
you.”

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain ;
Unresistedly and coldly,
I will smite you with my rain !
From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part,
He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
O'er the noble human heart !

Give him counsel against losing of that Eden !

Adam. Do ye scorn us ? Back your scorn
Toward your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion-strife ;
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though undone,
Not unmade for love and life.
Lo ! ye utter words in vain !
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire ;
By the pinings which disclose
That my native soul is higher,
Than what it chose,—

We are yet too high, O spirits, for your disdain.

Eve. Nay, beloved ! If these be low,

We confront them with no height ;
We stooped down to their level
In working them that evil ;
And their scorn that meets our blow,
Scathes aright.

Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly,
When ye lie beneath the sward !
There, my lily shall grow stately,
Though ye answer not a word—
And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence !
While your throne, ascending calmly,
We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm tree,
The dilated ocean, roll
With the thoughts that throbbed within you—round the
islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will :
With the grandeur of your spirit,

Shall our broad savannahs fill—
In our winds, your exultations shall be springing.
Even your parlance which inveigles,
By our rudeness, shall be won :
Hearts poetic in our eagles,
Shall beat up against the sun,
And pour downward, in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth,
With his thunderous jaw, shall wield !
Your high fancies shall our Mammoth
Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of St. Michael, at God's throne, who waits to speed him.
Till the heavens' smooth-grooved thunder
Spinning back, shall leave them clear;
And the angels, smiling wonder,
With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
Shall cry, " Ho, ye heirs of Adam ! ye exceed him !"
Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet, from the dreary
ground.
Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by *these*.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in *these*.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair,
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy,
Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose !

I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth ; and my heart
Hath beat against its petals all the day.
I thought it would be always red and full,
As when I plucked it—*Is* it ?—ye may see !
I cast it down to you that ye may see,
All of you !—count the petals lost of it—
And note the colours faded ! ye may see :
And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth !
I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
Which will not let me, down the slope of death,
Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins*

around the earth-zodiac ; and filling the circle with its presence, and then wailing off into the east, carries the flower away with it. EVE falls upon her face. ADAM stands erect.

Adam.

So, verily,

The last departs.

Eve.

So Memory follows Hope,

And Life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"

And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.

I exiled and I will not orphan Love."

But now it is no choice of mine to die—

My heart throbs from me.

Adam.

Call it straightway back.

Death's consummation crowns completed life,

Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee

For others ; if for others, then for thee,—

For thee and me.

[The wind revolves from the east, and round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-flower, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.

Let thy soul shake its leaves,

To feel the mystic wind—Hark !

Eve.

I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive,
Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into,
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange, that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
In a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve,
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which, with pulses manifold,
Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,—
Though the vessel's prow will quiver

At the lifting of the anchor :

Yet do we strive in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we conceive,

Is a clear thing and a fair,

Which we set in crystal air,

That its beauty may be plain :

With a breathing and a flooding

Of the heaven-life on the whole,

While we hear the forests budding

To the music of the soul—

Yet is it tuned in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we perceive,

Is a strong thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,—
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprieve,
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain !
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine ;—
For is all laughed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,—
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward main.
I hear life—life !

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched
Scarlet to paleness ; and thine eyes drink fast
Of glory from full cups ; and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words, or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life?
Hear the steep generations, how they fall
Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near ;
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all
these. [*Eve sinks down again.*

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we believe,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily,
To view God without a stain :
Till, recoiling where the shade is,
We retread our steps again,
And descend the gloomy Hades,
To taste man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart,
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.
“ Wilt thou be one with me ? ”
“ I will be one with thee ! ”

“Ha, ha!—we love and live!”

Alas! ye love and die!

Shriek—who shall reply?

For is it not loved in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be all in vain.

Old voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we receive,

Is a gloomy thing and brief,

Which, consummated in grief,

Leaveth ashes for all gain.

Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be *all* in vain. [*Voices die away.*

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Humanity

Die off;—so let me die.

Adam.

So let us die,

When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all
these.

Eve. O spirits ! by the gentleness ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,—
In gliding waters under lily-leaves,—
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush
A bird makes in her nest, with feet and wings,—
Fulfil your natures ! Do not any more
Taunt us or mock us—let us die alone.

Earth Spirits.

Agreed ; allowed !
We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings ! Thus, and thus !
Hearken, O hearken to us !

First Spirit.

As the east wind blows bleakly in the norland,—
As the snow-wind beats blindly from the moorland,—
As the simoom drives wild across the desert,—
As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,—
As the torrent tears an ocean-world to atoms,—
As the whirlpool grinds fathoms below fathoms,—
Thus,—and thus !

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,—
As the tiger, in the jungle, crouching stilly,—
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of anger,—
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangour,—
As the vultures that scream against the thunder,—
As the owlets that sit and moan asunder,—

Thus,—and thus !

Eve. Adam ! God !

Adam. Ye cruel, cruel, unrelenting Spirits !

By the power in me of the sovran soul,
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angels' march,
I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you !

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha ! thou art king !

With a sin for a crown,

And a soul undone :

Thou, who antagonised,

Tortured and agonised,

Art held in the ring

Of the zodiac !

Now, king, beware !
We are many and strong,
Whom thou standest among,—
And we press on the air,
And we stifle thee back,
And we multiply where
Thou wouldst trample us down
From rights of our own,
To an utter wrong—
And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn !
We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee ! I make appeal
Unto thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,
O sinned against, great God !—My seed, my seed,
There is hope set on THEE—I cry to thee,
Thou mystic seed that shalt be !—leave us not
In agony beyond what we can bear,
And in debasement below thunder-mark
For thine arch-image,—taunted and perplex

For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,
Which of you praises? since God made your acts
Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands
With instincts and imperious sanctities,
From self-defacement? Which of you disdains
These sinners, who, in falling, proved their height
Above you, by their liberty to fall?
And which of you complains of loss by them,
For whose delight and use ye have your life
And honour in creation? Ponder it!
This regent and sublime Humanity,
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,—
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,—
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this rule
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast
Devouring; tree by tree, with strangling roots
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, “Why, God, hast thou made us thus?”

And, pining to a sallow idiocy,
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life ;
Then stagnate into rottenness, and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore, over you,
Accept this sceptre ; therefore be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And service in you, to this sceptred hand.
Be ye to man as angels be to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest. So, at last,
He shall look round on you, with lids too straight
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well ;
And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
And praise you when he sings his open songs,
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you,
Of purifying sweetness ; and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies,
Which glorify you into soul from sense !

Go, serve him for such price. That not in vain ;
Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath for act
To be hereafter. In the name of which
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
I bless you through the hope and through the peace,
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit thou bless me not
In set words, I am blessed in hearkening thee—
Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence. Rise, aspire
Unto the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses, and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth ! Raise the majesties

Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
And front with level eyelids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world. Behold ! my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express,—
God breathing through my breath,—the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name ;
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, woman, rise
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,—
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters ! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness,
The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve ;
Found acceptable to the world instead

Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied ;
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood—
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin ;
Some pang paid down for each new human life ;
Some weariness in guarding such a life—
Some coldness from the guarded ; some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served ; from those beloved
Too loyally, some treason : feebleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty without ;
And pressures of an alien tyranny,
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to ! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
After its own life-working. A child's kiss,
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad :
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich ;
An old man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong ;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear

Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close ;
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close,—
I bless thee in the name of Paradise,
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost ;—by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out ;
And by the blessed nightingale, which threw
Its melancholy music after us ;—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
And fourfold river-courses :—by all these,
I bless thee to the contraries of these ;
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to this END
Of Death and the hereafter !

Eve.

I accept

For me and for my daughters this high part,

Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest ;
And in the place of Eden's lost delight,
Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;
While on my longest patience there shall wait
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the shade.
Shall it be so ? Shall *I* smile, saying so ?
O seed ! O King ! O God, who *shalt* be seed,—
What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains swelled
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
Betwixt Thy love and power !

And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first time
Since God said " Adam," walking through the trees,
I dare to pluck you, as I plucked erewhile
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope,
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,—
And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As thou, Christ, to illume it, holdest Heaven
Broadly above our heads.

*[The CHRIST is gradually transfigured during the following
phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.]*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast
woe,—

Diviner, with the possible of Death !

We worship in thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.

Adam. How do thy clear, still eyes transpierce our
souls,

As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne,

In a pathological, full Deity,

Serenely as the stars gaze through the air

Straight on each other.

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon.

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God ;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,
And grand dim lips, that murmur evermore

God, God, God ! while the rush of life and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,—
The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth
Of the ancient atoms, and first forms of earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas
And firmamental waters,—and the noise
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterant, solemn sound of—GOD !
Which WORD, innumerable angels straightway lift
High on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop
The burden softly ; shutting the last notes
Hushed up in silver wings ! I' the noon of time,
Nathless, that mystic-lipped Eternity
Shall wax as silent-dumb as Death himself,
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
“ God ! why hast thou forsaken me, my God ? ”
And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*]

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heavenlies; yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are thy voice and face !

Eve. My nature overcomes me from thine eyes.

CHRIST. Then, in the noon of time, shall one from
Heaven,

An angel fresh from looking upon God,
Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure love,
For all the world in all its elements ;
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea ;
For all men in the body and in the soul,
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship thee !
I thank thee for that woman !

CHRIST. For, at last,
I, wrapping round me your humanity,
Which, being sustained, shall neither break nor burn
Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs
I will confront your sins : and since your sins
Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,

The tears of my clean soul shall follow them,
And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In my brow
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned anew
Your discrowned human nature. Look on me !
As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
So shall I lift up in my pierced hands,
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
The whole creation. Henceforth in my name
Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope !
Your graves shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts ;
And, one step past them, a new Eden-gate
Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
First sinners and first mourners. Live and love,—
Doing both nobly, because lowly ;
Live and work, strongly,—because patiently !

And, for the deed of death, trust it to God,
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence, with constant prayers
Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
The smile of your heroic cheer may float
Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain !

[*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky ; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep back into the zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We, our homage-oath once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing ;
And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.
Here, forgive us all our scorning ;
Here, we promise milder duty ;

And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organize in beauty,
A sabbath day in sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us ;
If this mortal and unholy,
We still fail to cast out from us,—
And we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark in-
fluences ;

If ye tremble, when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm trees ;
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our marjoram and balm trees ;
And if your souls, all mournfully, sit down among your
senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,—
We are gentle in our languor ;
And more good ye shall have near us,
Than any pain or anger ;
And our God's refracted blessing, in our blessing, shall
be given !

By the desert's endless vigil,
We will solemnize your passions ;
By the wheel of the black eagle
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in
Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature ;
And our hands shall stroke the curse's
Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death, and straight
and slumberful :
Then, a couch we will provide you,
Where no summer heats shall dazzle ;
Strewing on you and beside you
The thyme and the sweet basil—
And the cypress shall grow overhead, to keep all safe
and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chrism around us running,

Whereby, newly-consecrated,
We shall leap up in God's sunning,
To join the spheric company, where the pure worlds
assemble ;
While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glorious,
Ye shall brighten past the angels—
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious ;
And the rays around His feet, beneath your sobbing
lips, shall tremble.

*[The phantastic vision has all passed ; the earth-zodiac has
broken like a belt, and dissolved from the desert. The
earth-spirits vanish ; and the stars shine out above, bright
and mild.]*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM and EVE advance into the desert, hand in hand.

Hear our heavenly promise,
Through your mortal passion !
Love, ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation !
As a fish or bird
Swims or flies, if moving,

We, unseen, are heard
To live on by loving.
Far above the glances
Of your eager eyes,
Listen ! we are loving !
Listen, through man's ignorances—
Listen, through God's mysteries—
Listen down the heart of things,
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Rustle with our loving !
Through the opal door,
Listen evermore
How we live by loving.

First semichorus.

When your bodies, therefore,
Lie in grave or goal,
Softly will we care for
Each enfranchised soul !
Softly and unlothly,
Through the door of opal,
We will draw you soothly
Toward the Heavenly people.

Floated on a minor fine
Into the full chant divine,
We will draw you smoothly,—
While the human in the minor
Makes the harmony diviner :
Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

Then a sough of glory
Shall your entrance greet ;
Ruffling, round the doorway,
The smooth radiance it shall meet.
From the Heavenly throned centre
Heavenly voices shall repeat—
“Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter ;
For the chrism on you is sweet.”
And every angel in the place
Lowlily shall bow his face,
Folded fair on softened sounds,
Because upon your hands and feet
He thinks he sees his Master's wounds :
Listen to our loving.

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
Consummated undoing,
Our angels of white mercies
Shall hover round the ruin !
Their wings shall stream upon the flame,
As if incorporate of the same,
In elemental fusion ;
And calm their faces shall burn out,
With a pale and mastering thought,
And a stedfast looking of desire,
From out between the clefts of fire,—
While they cry, in the Holy's name,
To the final Restitution !
Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
To the thick graves accompted ;
Awaking the dead bodies,
The angel of the trumpet
Shall split the charnel earth

To the roots of the grave,
Which never before were slackened ;
And quicken the charnel birth,
With his blast so clear and brave ;
Till the Dead all stand erect,—
And every face of the burial-place
Shall the awful, single look, reflect,
Wherewith he them awakened.
Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death !
He will leap up wild at the clamour
Above and beneath ;
And where is his Tamer
On that last day,
When he crieth, Ha, ha !
To the trumpet's evangel,
And paweth the earth's Aceldama ?
When he tosseth his head,
The drear-white steed,
And champeth athwart the last moon-ray,—
Oh, where is the angel

Can lead him away,
That the living may rule for the Dead?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found !
One more bright than seraphs crowned,
And more strong than cherub bold ;
Elder, too, than angel old,
By his grey eternities,—
He shall master and surprise

The steed of Death,
For He is strong, and He is fain ;
He shall quell him with a breath,
And shall lead him where He will,
With a whisper in the ear,
Which it alone can hear—

Full of fear—
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades, where the souls assemble,
HE will guide the Death-steed, calm between their
ranks ;

While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering
flanks.

Through the flats of Hades, where the dreary shade is,—
Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer guide the
steed,—

Up the spheric circles—circle above circle,
We, who count the ages, shall count the tolling tread—
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder, blanker sparkle,
From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were
dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed, with muffled hoofs, shall
travel,

Ashen gray the planets shall be motionless as stones;
Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,—
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons;
And suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their
level,

Shall run back on their axles, in wild, low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,

Shall the horse's nostrils steam the blurting breath ;
Up between the angels pale with silent feeling,
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse of death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne :
“Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,
With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who am thy Son.”
Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,
On the horse-eyes feeding, shall burn out their fire :
Blind the beast shall stagger, where It overcame him,—
Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in desire—
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

A Voice. Gabriel, thou Gabriel !

Another Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me ?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound in the angels' song ;
And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called thrice to my morning
star

And had no answer ? All the stars are out,

And round the earth, upon their silver lives,
Wheel out the music of the inner life,
And answer in their places. Only in vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of *my* star, shut in light behind the sun!
No more reply than from a breaking string,
Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star?
Where *is* my star—my star? Have ye cast down
Her glory like my glory? Has she waxed
Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt to hate
Like any angel?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee:
All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

Chorus. Live, work on, O Earthly!
By the Actual's tension,
Speed the arrow worthy
Of a pure ascension.
From the low earth round you,
Reach the heights above you;
From the stripes that wound you,
Seek the loves that love you!
God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel !

Second Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me ?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims ?
That HE claims THAT too ?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile from His
Heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile by His will,
As I by mine election !

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That *I* shall stand sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel !

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient star will give

Her name of 'Bright and Morning-Star' to HIM,—
And take the fairness of His virtue back,
To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. UNtrue, UNtrue! O morning-star! O
MINE!

Who sittest secret in a veil of light,
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters! I am Lucifer—

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*]

All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

Chorus. Exiled Human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger!
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's,
God is the Discharger;
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden,
In a light exceeding :
What their rays have measured,
Let your hearts fulfil !
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden ;
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still.

Chorus. Future joy and far light
Working such relations,—
Hear us singing gently—
Exiled is not lost !
God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost.
Patiently enduring,
Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you—
Hope the uttermost—

Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded,
Hear us sing above you—
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

[*The stars shine on brightly, while ADAM and EVE pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.*

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound,
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling, interwound ;
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground !
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air :
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
God-one, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest !
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven ;
Before the naughty world soon self-forgiven
For wronging him ; and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
Sing, seraph with the glory ! Heaven is high—
Sing, poet with the sorrow ! Earth is low !
The universe's inward voices cry
' Amen ' to either song of joy and woe—
Sing seraph,—poet,—sing on equally.

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH, BY
R. B. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. *He*, with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,—
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens ! A noble vision free,
Our Haydon's hand hath flung out from the mist !
No portrait this, with Academic air—
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
Saith no grace after meat. My wine hath run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled! Yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ! when thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.



I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see ;
Singing within myself as bird or bee,
When such do field-work on a morn of May :
But now I look upon my flowers,—decay
Hath met them in my hands, more fatally,
Because more warmly clasped ; and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends ? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields, and gather more ?
Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I !
My heart is very tired—my strength is low—
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befel,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing : at her marriage-bell,
The bride weeps : and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet hath forgot
That moisture on his cheeks. Commend the grace,
Mourners, who weep ! Albeit, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert place,
And touch but tombs,—look up ! Those tears will run
Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

G R I E F.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless—
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air,
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls, as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blenching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death ;
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath !
Touch it ! the marble eyelids are not wet—
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

—◆—

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh—
Not reason's subtle count! Not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew—
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
Self chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.



SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet—
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
In reach of thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth
To lose the sense of losing ! As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth ;
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.



EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand ;
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur,—‘ Where is any certain tune
Or measured music, in such notes as these ? ’—
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded ! their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences ;
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

W O R K.



WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil—
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with his odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hands,
From thy hands, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY.

—◆—
AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,—
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven to hold our idols ! and albeit
He brake them to our faces, and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,—
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,—
The dust shook from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses, in the church's brow and breast ;
And, by them, we find rest in our unrest,
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
God's fellowship, as if on Heavenly seat.
One is, AND JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet :—
And one is, where the Christ denied and scorned
LOOKED UPON PETER ! Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little, and mourned,—
That look of sovran love and sovran pain,
Which HE who could not sin, yet suffered, turned
On him who could reject, but not sustain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word—
No gesture of reproach ! The Heavens serene,
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way ! The forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was ; none guess : for those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call !
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
“ I never knew this man ”—did quail and fall,
As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and turned free,
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
“Thou Peter ! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon,
For all God’s charge, to His high angels, may
Guard my foot better ? Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me ’neath the morning-sun,—
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray ?—
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
For when thy deathly need is bitterest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,—
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.”

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.*

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Then pray alone—"O Christ, come tenderly !
By thy forsaken Sonship,—and the red
Drear wine-press,—and the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony
Fell bloody from thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine !
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine ;
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to Divine."

* Written at the request of my friend Miss Cockell, to whom it is inscribed.

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.



THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarolle ;
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident controul,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus, swift and stedfast ; thus, intent and strong ;
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude, and thirst of sweetnesses ;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower, grew nettle-rough—
The thoughts called bees, stung me to festering.
Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting.

AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear
Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
In the free voice O angels, let the flood
Of your salt scorn dash on me ! Do ye hear
What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face-to-face with God ?

DISCONTENT.

—◆—

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause ; complaining on—
Restless with rest—until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach ; or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm ! Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore ;
And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy main,
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

•

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

“O DREARY life!” we cry, “O dreary life!”
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven’s true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle. Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land: savannah-swards
Unweary sweep: hills watch, unworn; and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees,
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory. O thou God of old!
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to *these*;—
But so much patience, as a blade of grass
Grows by contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might be faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls. But since the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road—
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints?—At least it may be said,
“Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God!”

EXAGGERATION.



WE overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination, given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
By God's clear glory,—down our earth to rake
The dismal snows instead ; flake following flake,
To cover all the corn. We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers. Near the alderbrake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers ! let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein,
That, by the grief of ONE, came all our good.

ADEQUACY.

Now by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Beloved England,—doth the earth appear
Quite noble enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course ; nor that the clear
Strong stars, without significance, insphere
Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills,
Heap up against this good ; and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

— • —
A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,—
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light ! That thou to woman's claim,
And man's, might join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame ;
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman ! dost deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity ?
Ah, vain denial ! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn :—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name. And while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the spirit-shore ;
To which alone unsexing, purely aspire.

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years,
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at ! Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine ;
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

—◆—

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony !
But, like a dreary wind against a tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak—
The effluence of each is false to all ;
And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall !
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration, without let or thrall.

THE
ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy,
That ever master had.—

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine,
Did slow and thoughtful ride,—
As each were a palmer, and told for beads,
The dews of the eventide.

“O young page,” said the knight,
“A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow—”

“O brave knight,” said the page,
“Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game :
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

“Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new ;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through :
And in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

“The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought, from these, o’ the beechen-trees
Which, in our England, wave ;
And of the little finches fine,
Which sang there, while in Palestine
The warrior-hilt we drave.

“Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray !
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for *me*
Wherein she passed away ;
And I know the Heavens are leaning down
To hear what I shall say.”

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree ;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free !
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly :—

“Sir Page, I pray your grace !
Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
With the crook of the battle-bow ;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I trow, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

“ And this, I meant to say,—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My page from Palestine :
Or, speak she fair, or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

“ And this, I meant to fear,—
Her bower may suit thee ill !
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
Thy *talk* was somewhat still ;
And fitter thine hand for my knightly spear,
Than thy tongue for my lady's will.”

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head :
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead ;
And no lady in her bower pardiè,
Could blush more sudden red—
“ Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me,
Is suited well,” he said.

Beati, beati, mortui !

From the convent on the sea,—
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the lady Abbess dead before it,—
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
Her voice did charge and bless—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the Dead than upon death !

Beati, beati, mortui !

Now the vision in the sound
Wheelet on the wind around—
Now it sweeps aback, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.

Mortui !—away at last,—

Or ere the page's blush is past !
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

“ A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I served thee !
Though thou art a knight, and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved, or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye.”

Gloomily looked the knight ;—
“ As a son thou hast served me :
And would to none, I had granted boon,
Except to only thee !
For haply then I should love aright,—
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.

“ Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue,
To grudge that granted boon !
That heavy price, from heart and life,
I paid in silence down :

The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame ! I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.

“ Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend ;
And while I rode the lists at court,
And little guessed the end,—
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.

“ Oh, calm, below the marble grey,
My father's dust was strown !
Oh, meek, above the marble grey,
His image prayed alone !
The slanderer lied—the wretch was brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

“ But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it !

And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
 And against the knightly merit !
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon that traitor's corse,
 Was yielded the true spirit !

“I would mine hand had fought that fight,
 And justified my father !
I would mine heart had caught that wound,
 And slept beside him rather !
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend, and marriage-ring,
 Forced on my life together.

“Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
 His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
 As the earl did on his bier :
Till—‘ Ride, ride fast,’ she said at last,
 ‘ And bring the avengèd's son anear !

Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee ;
For white of ble, with waiting for me,
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

"I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife—
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely, when thou wert not here,
His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the court ;
My bark rocks on the brine ;
And the warrior's vow, I am under now,
To free the pilgrim's shrine :
But fetch the ring, and fetch the priest,
And call that daughter of thine ;
And rule she wide, from my castle on Nyde,
While I am in Palestine.'

“In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,

Ye wis, I could not see ;

But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,

And wedded fast were we.

Her mother smiled upon her bed,

As at its side we knelt to wed ;

And the bride rose from her knee,—

And kissed the smile of her mother dead,

Or ever she kissed me.

“My page, my page, what grieves thee so,

That the tears run down thy face ? ”—

“Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr

Was in thy lady’s case !

But *she* laid down the silks she wore

And followed him she wed before,

Disguised as his true servitor,

To the very battle-place.”

And wept the page, and laughed the knight,—

A careless laugh, laughed he :

“Well done it were for thy sistèr,

But not for my ladyè !

My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be."

The page stopped weeping, and smiled cold—
"Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear :
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well—I dare to hold—
By truth, or by despair."

He smiled no more—he wept no more,—
But passionate he spake,—
"Oh, womanly, she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake !
Oh, womanly, she paled in fight,
For one belovèd's sake !—
And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood,
Most woman-pure, did make !"

“ Well done it were for thy sistèr—
Thou tellest well her tale !
But for my lady, she shall pray
I’ the kirk of Nydesdale—
Not dread for me, but love for me,
Shall make my lady pale !
No casque shall hide her woman’s tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman’s veil.”

“ But what if she mistook thy mind,
And followed thee to strife ;
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
As Paynims ask for life ? ”
“ I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

“ Look up—there is a small bright cloud
Alone amid the skies !
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman’s glory lies.”

The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes :

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—
Ha ! who rides there ?—the page is 'ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still !
And the page seeth all, and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
“ Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide ! ”
“ Yea, fast, my page ; I will do so ;
And keep thou at my side.”

“ Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede !
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque, that galls, I trow,

The shoulder of my steed ;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

“ Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride !
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side.”
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
No smile the word had won !
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
I ween he had never gone !
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon !
For dread was the woe in the face so young ;
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-sprung,
And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands, as if to hold
His soul's great agony—
“Have I renounced my womanhood,
For wifehood unto *thee* ?
And is this the last, last look of thine,
That ever I shall see ?

“Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
A lady to thy mind ;
More woman-proud, and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind !
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind.”

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful Heavens to seek !
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her Loved did speak.
How bright the little cloud appears !
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,—
And the tears, down either cheek.

* * * * *

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming !
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
False page, but truthful woman !
She stands amid them all unmoved :
The heart, once broken by the loved,
Is strong to meet the foeman.

“ Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine cups, resting ? ”—
“ I keep my master’s noble name,
For warring, not for feasting :
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay to question.”

“ Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him ? ”—
“ Now search the lea, and search the wood,
And see if ye can find him !

Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him."

"Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying."—

"I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
'Twere better at replying."

They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through :
The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath,
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco !

From the convent on the sea,

Now it sweepeth solemnly !
As over wood and over lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns, with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco !

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dewes upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud !

Ingemisco, ingemisco !

Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one* ?

THE
LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

Go thy ways. I did not think to have shed one tear for thee, but
thou hast made me water my plants spite of my heart.

WITCH OF EDMONTON.

FIRST PART.

“ONORA, Onora ”—her mother is calling—
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom—and calls home the maiden—
“Night cometh, Onora.”

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end, where the green arbour is—
“Some sweet thought or other may keep where it
found her,
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
Night cometh—Onora !”

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles, when the anthem is done,
And the choristers, sitting with faces aslant,
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—

“Onora, Onora!”

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
“Onora, art coming?”—What is it she seeth?
Nought, nought, but the gray border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—

“My daughter!”—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
She is 'ware of her little son playing below :
“Now where is Onora?”—He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—

“At the tryst with her lover.”

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
“As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one,
And will ne'er wed another?”

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight, yet sad,
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had :
He stamped with his foot, said—" The saints know I lied,
Because truth that is wicked, is fittest to hide !

Must I utter it, mother ?"

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin ;
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
" Oh ! she sits with the nun of the brown rosarie,
At nights in the ruin !

" The old convent ruin, the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof ;
Where no singing-birds build ; and the trees gaunt and
grey,

As in stormy sea-coasts, appear blasted one way—

But is *this* the wind's doing ?

" A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
With an ave half-spoken.

“I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground !
A brave hound, my mother ! a brave hound, ye wot !
And the wolf thought the same, with his fangs at her
throat,

In the pass of the Brocken.

“At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
With the brown rosarie never used for a prayer ?
Stoop low, mother, low ! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even !

“Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even ?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven ?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*,
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosarie,
And a face turned from heaven ?

“St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams ; and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids, the warmth of her smile—
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—‘ Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora !
The Tempted is sinning.’ ”

Onora, Onora ! they heard her not coming—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming !
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning !

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes :
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ;
While—O soft !—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,
And floats through the chamber.

“ Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,” said she,
“ I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me !
And I know by the hills, that the battle is done—
That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee ! ”

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;
But the boy started up, pale with tears, passion-
wrought,—

“O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!

If he cometh, who told thee?”

“I know by the hills,” she resumed calm and clear,

“By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear!

Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu?

Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true

As St. Agnes in sleeping.”

Half-ashamed and half-softened, the boy did not speak,

And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:

She bowed bown to kiss him—Dear saints, did he see

Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARIE—

That he shrank away weeping?

PART SECOND.

A bed—ONORA sleeping. Angels, but not near.

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits, when

They meeken, not to God but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing,
That, at her waking, she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep!
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—

God's love—for man's!

First Angel.

We may reprove

The world for this! not only her!—

Let me approach, to breathe away

This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before:

While, in a mother undefiled,

Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true

And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: Is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!

THE PLACE IS FILLED. [Angels *vanish*.

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to
Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream,
sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit.

It is a *thought*.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good—
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it
would.

I say in it no holy hymn,—I do no holy work;
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the
kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least !

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast—
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often
done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so !
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirk-
yard stone,—

Oh, deep and straight ; oh, very straight ! they move
at nights alone :

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth
tenderly,—

‘Come forth my daughter, my beloved, and walk the
fields with me !’

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a
sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied ! my word shall
answer thine.

I hear a bird which used to sing when I a child was
praying ;

I see the poppies in the corn, I used to sport away
in !—

What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the
blossoms blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the
rowen ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still ! Stand up where
thou dost stand,

Among the fields of Dreamland, with thy father, hand
in hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—declare its cause
and kind,

Which, not to break in sleep or wake, thou bearest on
thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of wicked kind, a vow for mournful cause :

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laughed
applause !

The spirits trailed, along the pines, low laughter like a
breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared
to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow
was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back
afraid !

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear to
die ;—

I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company !
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine, upon my lips that
smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee, might, so, have sha-
dowed twain—

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the
pain.

Love feareth death ! I was no child—I was betrothed
that day ;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips, I could not give away !
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a
stone,

And feel mine own Betrothed go by—alas ! no more
mine own,—

Go leading by, in wedding pomp, some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine
were cold in grave ?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a
throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her* ! that else he loveth
none ?

Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low
he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he
might take—

That *her's*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes—ah, me ! while
very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven !) would darken
down to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wert called to death ?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—

The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to
hide thee ;

And ever he flapped his heavy wing, all brokenly and
weak,

And the long grass waved against the sky, around his
gasping beak !

I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay
forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud, in ghastly
fragments torn !

And through the night, and through the hush, and over
the flapping wing,

We heard, beside the Heavenly Gate, the angels mur-
muring :—

We heard them say, ‘ Put day to day, and count the
days to seven,

‘ And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of
Heaven :

‘And yet He grants the evil ones, that purpose to defer,
‘For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of *her*’—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—

‘I count upon my rosarie brown, the hours thou hast
to stay !

‘Yet God permits us evil ones to put by that decree,
‘Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of
thee—

‘And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
‘Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall guess what
angels be—

‘Nor bride shall pass, save thee’ . . . Alas!—my father’s
hand’s acold—

The meadows seem. . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told !

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown, this string of antique
beads,

By charnal lichens overgrown, and dank among the
weeds—

This rosarie brown which is thine own,—lost soul of
buried nun,—

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike
undone ;—

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown,—and, till such vow
should break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my
neck—

I vowed to thee on rosarie (Dead father, look not so !),
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in
my woe.*

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love ! I felt him near again !
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain !
Was this no weal for me to feel ?—is greater weal than
this ?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels
heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done !

Onora in sleep.

Ay me ! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ay me ! how dread can look the Dead !—Aroint thee,
father mine !

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through
the night !

There is nought ! The great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor ;
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARIE.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal ; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the
 chapelle ;
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
 At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair companie,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,—
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely, and think for the nonce,
 ' And so endeth a wooing ! '

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say :
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,—
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,
 When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,—
Till in nearing the chapel, and glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the door,—

Is it play that he seeketh ?

Is it play ? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child !
He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

“ O fair-featured maids, ye are many ! ” he cried,—
“ But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride ?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many ! but whom,
For the courage and woe, can ye match with the groom,
As ye see them before ye ? ”

Out spake the bride’s mother—“ The vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine ! ”
Out spake the bride’s lover—“ The vileness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine,
And the charge be unprovèd.

“Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it
aloud—

Let thy father and her's, hear it deep in his shroud!”—

—“O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—

How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosarie*,

O my father belovèd!”

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel-wall—

“So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,” quoth he,

“She may wear an she listeth, a brown rosarie,

Like a pure-hearted lady!”

Then swept through the chapel, the long bridal train!

Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:

On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went,

Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,

Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,

And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view,

That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue,

As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white,
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

“In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for Heaven!
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead—
O shrive her and wed not!”

In tears, the bride's mother,—“Sir priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair companie!”
In wrath, the bride's lover,—“The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear—
Be the charge proved or said not!”

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place—
“Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom a *brown rosarie*!
Is it used for the praying?”

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled with smiles shut within:
Quoth the priest—"Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed
she,

Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosarie
To a worldly arraying!"

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun—
They have knelt down together to rise up as one—
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,—
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the
sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest, without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
He felt a power on him, too strong for his will;

And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

“I have sinned,” quoth he, “I have sinned, I wot”—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought ;
They dropped fast on the book ; but he read on the
same,—

And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done,
They who knelt down together, arise up as one :
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosarie,
No saint at her praying !

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and
wide—

Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—
His lip stung her with cold : she glanced upwardly mute :
“Mine own wife,” he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,—
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine, and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor !

Let his bride gaze upon him !

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there,
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her !
But when they stood up—only *they* ! with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—

She has lived, and forgone him !

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
“ Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own ?
Then take thine own with thee ! thy coldness is warm
To the world’s cold without thee ! Come, keep me
from harm

In a calm of thy teaching ! ”

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his
mouth ;

And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
“ Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me !—
God, hear my beseeching ! ”

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay ;
She was 'ware of a presence that wither'd the day—
Wild she sprang to her feet,—“ I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosarie,—
I am ready for dying ! ”

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground,
Where it fell mute as snow ; and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn,
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk :

“ I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk !

I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—

Of the stedfast skies above, the running brooks below ;—

All things are the same but I ;—only I am dreary ;

And, mother, of my dreariness, behold me very weary.

“ Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the
spring

And smiled to think I should smile more upon their
gathering.

The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them,
dearest mine,

And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes’
shrine.”

—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted
in the spring,

And her and them, all mournfully, to Agnes’ shrine did
bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint, and gently shook
her head—

“The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,” she
said :

“The little flowers we brought with us, before it we
may lay,

For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn
away,—

Because no sinner under sun, can dare or bear to gaze
On God’s or angel’s holiness, except in Jesu’s face.”

She spoke with passion after pause—“And were it
wisely done,

If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth
alone?—

If we whose virtue is so weak, should have a will so
strong,—

And stand blind on the rocks, to choose the right path
from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love
and Heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose-tree, which beareth seven times
seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the
breast,

Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the
best ! ”

Then breaking into tears,—“Dear God,” she cried,
“and must we see

All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere we go to THEE?
We cannot guess thee in the wood, or hear thee in the
wind ?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the light be-
hind ?

Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal, to need thee on
that road ;

But woe being come, the soul is dumb, that crieth
not on ‘God.’ ”

Her mother could not speak for tears ; she ever mused
thus—

“ *The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left
for *us* ? ”

But her young brother stayed his sobs, and knelt beside
her knee,

—“Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word
for me?”

She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on
his cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers
bloomed no more—

The woman fair who placed it there, had died an
hour before!

Both perished mute, for lack of root, earth's nourish-
ment to reach;—

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith), some sweetness
out of each!

THE MOURNFUL MOTHER,
(OF THE DEAD BLIND).

Dost thou weep, mournful mother,
For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other,
Sweet counsel ye can have?—
That *he*, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?

Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still oft,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mournful mother!

But since to him when living,
Thou wert both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone

Sustain that exaltation—
Expand that tender light ;
And hold in mother-passion,
Thy Blessed, in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway
To mediate 'twixt the two,—
Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
At once to Light and God !—
For the first face, beholding
The Christ's in its divine,—
For the first place, the golden
And tideless hyaline ;
With trees, at lasting summer,
That rock to songful sound,
While angels, the new-comer,
Wrap a still smile around !
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,—

Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
Than others, o'er his eyes,—
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song
Which, in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long,—
And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,—
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mournful mother ;
Thy blind boy walks in light !
Ye wait for one another,
Before God's infinite !
But *thou* art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
Content that it be so ;—
Until ye two give meeting
Where the great Heaven-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest *his* !
Wait on, thou mournful mother.

A VALEDICTION.

GOD be with thee my beloved,—God be with thee !
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,—
 Moor and pleasance, all around thee and beneath thee,
 Looking equal in one snow !
 While I who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,
 With the farewell and the hollo,
 And cannot reach thee so.
 Alas ! I can but teach thee—
 GOD be with thee my beloved,—God be with thee !

 Can I teach thee my beloved,—can I teach thee ?
 If I said, Go left or right,
 The counsel would be light,—
 The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee !

My right would show like left ;
My raising would depress thee,—
My choice of light would blind thee,—
Of way, would leave behind thee,—
Of end, would leave bereft !
Alas ! I can but bless thee—.

May GOD teach thee my beloved,—may GOD teach
thee !

Can I bless thee my beloved,—can I bless thee ?

What blessing word can I,
From mine own tears, keep dry ?

What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress
thee ?

My good reverts to ill ;
My calmnesses would move thee,—
My softnesses would prick thee,—
My bindings up would break thee,—
My crownings, curse and kill.

Alas ! I can but love thee—.

May GOD bless thee my beloved,—may GOD bless
thee !

Can I love thee my beloved,—can I love thee?

And is *this* like love, to stand

With no help in my hand,

When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?

My love-kiss can deny

No tear that falls beneath it:

Mine oath of love can swear thee

From no ill that comes near thee,—

And thou diest while I breathe it,

And *I*—I can but die!

May GOD love thee my beloved,—may GOD love thee!

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.



A poet writes to his friend. Place—A room in Wycombe Hall.

Time—Late in the evening.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my
spirit o'er you ;

Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely
run at will !

I am humbled who was humble ! Friend,—I bow my
head before you !

You should lead me to my peasants !—but their faces
are too still.

There 's a lady—an earl's daughter ; she is proud and
she is noble ;

And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes
the perfumed air ;

And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye
to trouble,

And the shadow of a monarch's crown, is softened in
her hair.

She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant
steam-eagles

Follow far on the directing of her floating dove-like
hand—

With a thundrous vapour trailing, underneath the starry
vigils,

So to mark upon the blasted heaven, the measure of
her land.

There be none of England's daughters, who can show
a prouder presence ;

Upon princely suitors suing, she has looked in her
disdain :

She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
peasants ;

What was *I* that I should love her—save for feeling
of the pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her case-
ment,

As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of
other things.

Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my
abasement,

In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in
wings!

Many vassals bow before her, as her chariot sweeps
their door-ways;

She hath blest their little children,—as a priest or
queen were she!

Oh, too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon the
poor was,

For I thought it was the same smile, which she used,
to smile on *me*.

She has members in the commons, she has lovers in the
palace—

And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as
fine:

Even the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red
wine and the chalice :

Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my
Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to
poet uses—

To love all things set above me, all of good and all
of fair!

Nymphs of old Parnassus mountain, we are wont to
call the Muses—

And in silver-footed climbing, poets pass from mount
to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the people
praised me, •

With their critical deductions for the modern writer's
fault;

I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies
that raised me,

Still suggested clear between us, the pale spectrum
of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence ;—“ Will your
book appear this summer ? ”

Then returning to each other—“ Yes, our plans are
for the moors ; ”

Then with whisper dropped behind me—“ There he is !
the latest comer !

Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she
endures.

“ Quite low born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though
by nature,—

And we make a point of asking him,—of being very
kind ;

You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he
writes no satire,—

These new charmers keep their serpents with the antique
sting resigned.”

I grew colder, I grew colder, as I stood up there among
them,—

Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning
scorched my brow ;

When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-
rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
through.

I looked upward and beheld her! With a calm and
regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
them all—

“Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that, able to
confer it,
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to
Wycombe Hall?”

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word
of her speaking ;
But because a silence followed it, blushed scarlet, as
for shame ;
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—
“I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy
of my claim.

“Ne’ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a
woman,”—

(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, over-
flowed her mouth)

“But because my woods in Sussex have some purple
shades at gloaming,

Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his
youth.

“I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no hive for worldly
speeches—

Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked
the thrushes first—

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my
beeches,

I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human
world at worst.”

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed
around right queenly ;

And I bowed—I could not answer ! Alternated light
and gloom—

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye
serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from
the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still
around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the
wind!

Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! Oh, the cruel love
that bound me
Up against the boles of cedars, to be shaméd where
I pined!

Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's
dart has found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me
mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the nume-
rous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with
gliding feet;

And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling,
softly freighted

All the air about the windows, with elastic laughs
sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on
the terrace,

Which the floating orbs of curtains, did with gradual
shadow sweep ;

While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the
heiress,

Trembled downward through their snowy wings, at
music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and
singing,

Till the finches of the shrubberies, grew restless in
the dark ;

But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight
ringing,

And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows
of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her
 silver-corded speeches,
To commix my words and laughter with the converse
 and the jest,—
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river, through the
 beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure
 voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and
 laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard, till we lost
 them in the hills ;
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left
 beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens, through the laurels
 and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded
 —with the flowings
Of the virginal white vesture, gathered closely to her
 throat ;

With the golden ringlets in her neck, just quickened by
her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if
to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand
held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her
and the skies,—
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on
to love her,
And to study the deep meaning of the smile hid in her
eyes.

For her eyes alone smiled constantly : her lips had
serious sweetness,
And her front was calm—the dimple rarely rippled on
her cheek :
But her deep blue eyes smiled constantly,—as if they
had by fitness
Won the secret of a happy dream, she did not care to
speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the
garden :

And I walked among her noble friends, and could not
keep behind ;

Spake she unto all and unto me—" Behold, I am the
warden,

Of the birds within these lindens, which are cages to
their mind.

" But here, in this swarded circle, into which the lime-
walk brings us—

Whence the beeches rounded greenly, stand away in
reverent fear,—

I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings
us,

Which the lilies round the basin, may seem pure
enough to hear.

" And the air that waves the lilies, waves this slender
jet of water,

Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting
saint !

Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the
sculptor wrought her)

So asleep, she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a fancy
quaint.

“ Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream
between them lingers!

And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips
upon the cheek :

And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack
within the fingers,—

Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will
not speak !

“ That the essential meaning growing, may exceed the
special symbol,

Is the thought, as I conceive it: it applies more high
and low,—

Your true noblemen will often, through right noble-
ness, grow humble,

And assert an inward honour, by denying outward
show.”

“ Yes, your Silence,” said I, “ truly holds her symbol
rose but slackly,

Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to
our ken!

And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or
walk blackly

In the presence of the social law, as most ignoble
men.

“ Let the poets dream such dreaming ! Madam, in these
British islands,

’Tis the substance that wanes ever, ’tis the symbol
that exceeds :

Soon we shall have nought but symbol ! and for statues
like this Silence

Shall accept the rose’s marble—in another case, the
weed’s.”

“ I let *you* dream,” she retorted, “ and I grant where’er
you go, you

Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure
gold for honour clear ;

But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will
throw you
The world's book, which now reads drily, and sit down
with Silence here."

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in
indignation ;
Her friends turned her words to laughter, while her
lovers deemed her fair,—
A fair woman—flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted
station,
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in
sunny air!—

With the trees round, not so distant, but you heard
their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and
outward move ;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to
be warmer,
And recoiling backward, trembling with the too much
light above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance ! and thus, morning
after morning,

Did I follow as she drew me, by the spirit, to her
feet—

Why her greyhound followed also ! dogs—we both were
dogs for scorning—

To be sent back when she pleased it, and her path lay
through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of oath, and
spite of sorrow,

Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days
passed along ;

Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
to-morrow,—

Or to teach the hill-side echo, some sweet Tuscan in
a song.

Ay, and sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down
in the gowans,

With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast
before ;

And the river running under ; and across it, from the
rowans,

A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the
air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the
poems

Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various,
of our own ;

Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle
inter-flowings

Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the
leaf is folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,

Howitt's ballad-dew, or Tennyson's enchanted re-
verie,—

Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut
deep down the middle,

Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity !—

Or I read there sometimes, hoarsely, some new poem of
my making—

Oh, your poets never read their own best verses to
their worth,—

For the echo, in you, breaks upon the words which you
are speaking,

And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate, through which
you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence
round us flinging

A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings
at the breast,—

She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of wood-
land singing,

Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of
rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is
divinest—

For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on
the tune ;

And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when
the notes are finest,

'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light, and seem to
swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so
cadenced in the talking,

Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without
bars—

While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round
where we were walking,

Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about
the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she
always thought them—

And had sympathies so ready, open, free as bird on
branch,

Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way be-
sought them,

In the birchen wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the
grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she
speaks lightly ;
And she has a grace in being gay, which mourners
even approve ;
For the root of some grave earnest thought is under-
struck so rightly,
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers
above.

And she talked on—*we* talked truly ! upon all things—
substance—shadow—
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in
the corn—
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding
through the meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by
its scorn !

So of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher
stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to
hear !

So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly
into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as it trod from
sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me, when I said,—“ The
Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly, to the
glory of the stars—
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut
up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of
our cars.

“ For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-
admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—‘ O the wondrous,
wondrous age,’
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our
iron,—
Or if angels will commend us, at the goal of pil-
grimage.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep
resources,

But the child's most gradual learning to walk straightly
without bane—?

When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic
white horses,

Are we greater than the first men, who led black
ones by the mane?

“If we sided with the eagles, if we struck the stars in
rising,

If we wrapped the globe intensely, with one hot electric
breath,

'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-
power conferring—

And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men
in death.”

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—
loved her certes,

As I loved all Heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes
and hands!

As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved
the virtues,—

In a Love content with writing his own name, on
desert sands.

Or at least I thought so purely !—thought, no idiot
Hope was raising

Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that
sate alone—

Out, alas ! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on
grazing

With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels
with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled ! I told you that her hand had
many suitors—

But she rose above them, smiling down, as Venus
down the waves—

And with such a gracious coldness, that they could not
press their futures

On that present of her courtesy, which yieldingy
enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner
chamber

With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant
thought serene—

For I had been reading Camoëns—that poem you
remember,

Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest
ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it,
taking from it

A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its
own,—

As the branch of a green osier, when a child would
overcome it,

Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging
in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it
grew longer—

Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine,
you would!"

And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents
stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric
good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that
matched his station—
Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read
on his brow :
Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his
domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a
bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes,
of less expression
Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other
men,
As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which seem to taste
possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or
distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing
by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of arts, and
letters too;
Just a good man, made a proud man,—as the sandy
rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and
flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not
help the hearkening:
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning
heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on
all sides, darkening,
And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my
feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—
for wealth, position, . . .
For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be
done—

And she answered, answered gently—"Nay, my lord,
the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,
should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his
he either drew it,
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she
replied—
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had
best eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points, less easy
to decide."

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his
trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in
slow scorn—
"And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry,
shall be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how
he was born."

There, I maddened ! her words stung me ! Life swept
through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished ; sprang, full-
statured in an hour !
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic
NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sub-
limes to power ?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded !—waved a
flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes ! I felt self-
drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures ; and I saw the skies
grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what
spirits can !

I was mad—inspired—say either ! anguish worketh
inspiration !
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so ; for the tiger roars,
when speared ;

And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my
passion—

Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and
never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved
my coming—

But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet
and grew pale :

Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man
or woman,

In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do
but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-
brothers,

Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face
upon her hands—

And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her
and others!

I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with
my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though
leaf-verdant,—

Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the pur-
ples and the gold,

And the 'landed stakes' and Lordships—all that spirits
pure and ardent

Are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing
not to hold.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love
you, Madam,

But for better souls, that nearer to the height of
yours have trod—

And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels
to Adam,

Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to
God.

"Yet, O God" (I said), "O grave" (I said), "O mo-
ther's heart and bosom,

With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse
and little child !

We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of
heart-closing !

We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies
defiled !

“ Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth
—*that* needs no learning ;

That comes quickly—quick as sin does ! ay, and often
works to sin ;

But for Adam's seed, MAN ! Trust me, 'tis a clay above
your scorning,

With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling
breath within.

“ What right have you, Madam, gazing in your shining
mirror daily,

Getting, so, by heart, your beauty, which all others
must adore,—

While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers,
to vow gaily, . .

You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and
nothing more.

“Why, what right have you, made fair by that same
God—the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned — with your lovely
spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish, if its smile were
not so human,—
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common
words to grace :

“What right *can* you have, God’s other works, to scorn,
despise, . . . revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble*
men, forsooth,—
But as Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil
them,
In the hope of living—dying,—near that sweetness of
your mouth ?

“Have you any answer, Madam ? If my spirit were
less earthy—
If its instrument were gifted with more vibrant silver
strings—

I would kneel down where I stand, and say—‘Behold
me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a
king.’

“As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this
stain upon her—
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me
and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and
your dishonour—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent dis-
dain!”

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I
need not write them fuller;
And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in
showers of tears—
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast had
scarce been duller,
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining
of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating
with thunder,
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face
up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked
up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said "Bertram!"
it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even,
with queenly bearing,
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up
and said,
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore, I have given
you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat
less, instead—"

I had borne it!—but that "Bertram"—why it lies there
on the paper
A mere word, without her accents,—and you cannot
judge the weight

Of the calm which crushed my passion! I seemed
swimming in a vapour,—

And her gentleness did shame me, whom her scorn
made desolate.

So, struck backward, and exhausted with that inward
flow of passion

Which had passed, in deadly rushing, into forms of
abstract truth,—

With a logic agonizing through unfit denunciation,—

And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey
the hairs of youth,—

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
wisely,

I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed
was true—

To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there
weighing nicely

A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds
as I could do!—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered
and occasioned,—

As a wild horse, through a city, runs with lightning
in his eyes,

And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
impassioned,

Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly
drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her ! Do you blame me,
friend, for weakness ?

'Twas my strength of passion slew me !—fell before
her like a stone ;

Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring
wheels of blackness !

When the light came I was lying in this chamber—
and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the
sickly burden,

And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond*
the gate—

She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to
pardon

Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to
her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I
write this letter,—

How my life is read all backward, and the charm of
life undone !

I shall leave this house at dawn—I would to-night, if I
were better—

And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened
for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the orient, I depart with no last
gazes,

No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing
for her hands,—

Out of reach of her derisions, and some unavailing
praises,

To make front against this anguish in the far and
foreign lands.

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am
abstemious ;

I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar
again !

There's no room for tears of weakness, in the blind
eyes of a Phemius :

Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die
till then.

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence
ever

Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell his tears on every
leaf :

Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips
that quiver

From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten
thoughts of grief.

Soh ! how still the lady standeth ! 'tis a dream—a dream
of mercies !

'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth
still and pale !

'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-
curses—

Sent to sweep a patient quiet, o'er the tossing of his
wail.

“ Eyes,” he said, “ now throbbing through me ! are ye
eyes that did undo me ?

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-
stone !

Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burn-
ing torrid,

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life
undone ? ”

With a murmurous stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple
curtain

Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless
pale brows ;

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise
for ever,
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
slant repose.

Said he—"Vision of a lady ! stand there silent, stand
there steady !
Now I see it plainly, plainly ; now I cannot hope or
doubt—
There, the cheeks of calm expression—there, the lips of
silent passion,
Curvéd like an archer's bow, to send the bitter arrows
out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding
measured pace ;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one
offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his
face.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath,
or stir of vesture ;

Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine !
No approaching—hush ! no breathing ! or my heart
must swoon to death in

The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of
Geraldine ! ”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling—

But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and
tenderly ;

“Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me ? Is no woman far
above me,

Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a
one as *I* ? ”

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of
that river,

Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea ;
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full com-
pleteness,—

Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—
through this dream of *THEE* ! ”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,—

While the shining tears ran faster down the blushing
of her cheeks ;

Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she
softly told him,

“ Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only
speaks.”

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell
before her—

And she whispered low in triumph—“ It shall be as
I have sworn !

Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—noble, certes ;
And I shall not blush in knowing, that men call him
lowly born !”

END OF VOL. I.

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